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Endpapers

by JACK MILES

Today is Easter, a feast Jesus did not celebrate. Friday and Saturday began Passover, a feast he celebrated every year of his adult life. As Christmas is a Christian holiday that invades the Jewish calendar, so Passover is the reverse, for Christians cannot tell themselves their Easter story without hearing, in the New Testament itself, about the most famous *seder* in history, the Last Supper. The Passover story—in Hebrew the *haggadah shel pesakh*—is therefore the pre-eminent book of this season.

As told, or as read aloud at the Passover meal, the Haggadah is the story of Israel's deliverance from bondage in Egypt—adorned with rhymes, psalms, proverbs, songs and riddles for children, and, in short, a little of everything. The respect in Judaism for the letter-by-letter transmission of the Hebrew Bible stops here, for the Haggadah, rather than sacred scripture, is a kind of religious folk literature. For all the gravity of the central subject matter—an escape from mortal peril—Jews have quite literally played with this text over the many centuries of its life, and they continue to do so.

The traditional Haggadah can be had free in pamphlet-sized editions distributed by the manufacturers of special Passover foods. Or for $65 ($75 after June 1), it can be had in the form of a new Abrams facsimile edition of "The Ashkenazi Haggadah," an illuminated Hebrew manuscript written in Germany in the mid-15th Century and now the property of the British Library.

One opens this outsize slipcased volume from either side: 100 pages read from right to left in the Hebrew manner; 40 pages from left to right in the Latin manner. The "front" 40 contain both a transcription and a translation of the text of the "back" 100, which in turn contain both the Hebrew Haggadah proper and a 200-year-old Aramaic commentary on it (the Aramaic, written in an academy in Germany, was 200 years old at the time the manuscript was *copied*; the Haggadah itself is hundreds of years older still). David Goldstein, curator of Hebrew manuscripts and printed books at the British Library, is responsible for the translation, the transcription and an informative introduction entitled "The Book and Its History."

The bold illuminations of the original manuscript are, of course, its principal claim on our attention. I will mention only two among the several dozen.

At one cheerful juncture, the Haggadah asks, in effect: How many kinds of students are there? There are four, it turns out: the wise, the wicked, the simple and a fourth variety, distinct from the simple, called circumlocutionally "who does not know how to ask a question." This fourth type is presented in the marginal illumination as a young, blond man in a blue-and-gold costume smiling at himself in a mirror. My association to this illumination, I regret to say, is the Associated Students of UCLA, who celebrate Mardi Gras, year after year, some weeks after Easter. Someone should *tell* them, which is what the Haggadah says should be done with all who do not know enough to ask.

A second, more serious illumination, perhaps the most powerful in the manuscript, is the one reproduced on Page 4 of this week's Book Review. "LO LANU," it reads, "NOT TO US," in minatory, lion-headed majuscules that would more than fill the space occupied by this entire column. The words quote a verse from Psalm 115: "Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name give glory!"

A strange notion this one: Why ask God to glorify himself? But the odd, antique prayer that God remember to be no less than God carries within it a recognizably "modern" hope that man remember to be no more than man, that the nation and the world be spared, in other words, the inflation of any human being, any human power, to the superhuman size of a pharaoh, a monster, an oppressor. From that inflation, this Easter Sunday, may all Jews, all Christians and all the Associated Students of UCLA be delivered.

Book Notes

by DICK LOCHTE

EVENTS—*Sunday:* 3:30 p.m., Harriet Rochlin discusses her "Pioneer Jews: A New Life in the Far West" on the Jewish Television Network, Group W Cable (Channel 10).

Monday: 8 p.m., San Francisco-based poet-editor Judy Grahn appears as keynote speaker for Gay and Lesbian Awareness Week at UCLA's Sunset Canyon Recreation Center; free to the public; call UCLA Center for the Performing Arts.

Tuesday: 7:45 p.m., author-columnist Christopher Nyerges begins a 10-week Writing for Survival class at the First Congregational Church, Parlor C, in Pasadena (corner Los Robles Avenue and Walnut); call (818) 797-1114. . . . 8 p.m., Nancy Shiffrin and Sylvia Rosen read their poetry at SPARC (685 Venice Blvd.). . . . 8 p.m., Richard Meltzer, Jack Skelley, Amy Gerstler, Laurie Fox and Charles Webb tell tall tales at Al's Bar (305 S. Hewitt Ave.).

Wednesday: 9 a.m., Leigh Charlton ("Chic on a Shoestring") appears on "AM Los Angeles" on KABC-TV (Channel 7). . . . 1-4 p.m., author Joan Follendore begins a four-session nonfiction writing course in Marina del Rey; it will be repeated 7-10 p.m.; call (213) 306-3986. . . . 7:30-9:30 p.m., Ralph Blum discusses his "The Book of Runes" at the Malibu Community Center (6955 Fernhill Drive); call (213) 457-5440. . . . 7:30 p.m., Thomas D. Carpenter ("Pasadena: Resort Hotels and Paradise") lectures in the Little Theater at the Pasadena Convention Center (300 E. Green St.); (818) 405-4037.

Thursday: 8 p.m., Linda Albertano reads at the Kerckoff Coffee House at UCLA. . . . 8 p.m., Ellen, Mima Pereira and Anne Marple guest at the monthly poetry reading at the Angels Gate Cultural Center in San Pedro (3601 S. Gaffey); call (213) 519-1874.

Friday: 8 p.m., novelist John Rechy and prose writer Bruce Boone read at Beyond Baroque in Venice (681 Venice Blvd.); (213) 822-3006. . . . 8 p.m., Deena Metzger and Leah Really read from their work at the Woman's Building (1727 N. Spring St.); (213) 222-2477. . . . 8 p.m., Bob Brown reads at the Laguna Poets gathering, at the Laguna Beach Public Library (363 Glenneyre). . . . 8 p.m., author Jean-Pierre Hallet discusses the natural history, zoology and life in Africa, at the Malibu Community Center (6955 Fernhill Drive).

Saturday: 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., Marilyn Zeitlin begins a Young Writers Workshop for UCLA Extension, at UCLA; (213) 825-9415. . . . 2-5 p.m., Frank Herbert signs his "Chapterhouse: Dune" at A Change of Hobbit in Santa Monica (1853 Lincoln Blvd.). . . . 2:30 p.m., poets Judith Altschule-Lieber, John Brander, Betsy Rhodes, Phyllis Thompson, Marcia Van Wyck and Bart Yoder; playwright John Warriner, and composer Jill Timmons present their work at the Celebration of the Arts at Irvine Public Library in Irvine (4512 Sandburg Way); $1 donation. . . . 7:30 p.m., Wilmon Menard, author of "The Two Worlds of Somerset Maugham" appears in conjunction with La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art's series of screenings of films adapted from the works of Maugham. Tonight's feature is the 1946 version of "The Razor's Edge." In La Jolla (700 Prospect); call (619) 454-3541). . . . 9 p.m., Sue Mero reads poetry and stories at the Natural Fudge Company (5224 Fountain); (213) 550-1915.

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SHORT STORY CONTEST—Fiction Network, a newspaper and magazine syndicate for fiction, is offering $1,500 and syndication for short fiction. Judges are The Times' Art Seidenbaum, Chris Wohlwend of the Atlanta Journal and author Lynne Sharon Schwartz. The contest is open to all. Enter only one unpublished manuscript, fewer than 2,500 words, typed and double-spaced, before June 30. For full rules, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to Fiction Competition, Fiction Network, P.O. Box 5651, San Francisco 94101.

Send material for Book Notes, including poetry readings, to Dick Lochte, P.O. Box 5413, Santa Monica, Calif. 90405 no later than 10 days before issue date.

Letters

Rundown on Japanese Verse

Regarding John Espey's review of "The Haiku Handbook" by William J. Higginson with Penny Harter (Book Review, March 24), either Espey or the author of the book has blundered. Espey writes, "He (Higginson) explains and defines the forms of the *Tanka*, the *Renga*, the linked verse stanzas of the *Senryu*. . . ."

Now *Renga*, not *Senryu*, is defined as linked verse by every Haikuist I have ever known or read about. *Senryu* is a comic or satiric form of Haiku, i.e. three lines of five-seven-five syllables respectively that do not necessarily include a seasonal theme as should Haiku.

Here's a brief rundown on Japanese verse: *Tanka* developed first and predates the more familiar Haiku by nearly 1,000 years. From the earliest times *Tanka* was composed in five lines of five-seven, five-seven, seven syllables, the first pair of lines treating one thought, the second pair dealing with another, and the last line serving as a refrain or reiteration. But as time passed, it began to be written in a five-seven-five, seven-seven pattern that in time became the "modern" Haiku. During the slow transformation of the *Tanka* to the Haiku, there arose a verse form called *Renga* or linked verse. Single link *Renga* was a form of *Tanka* usually written by two people, one writing the first (five-seven-five) section and the other adding the second (seven-seven) section. The name *Hokku* was used for this first section in a chain of *Renga* that could stretch out quite long . . . . Since the first verse set the tone of that which followed, it was considered the most important and began to stand alone, and so Haiku was born.

DONALD JOHNS
Venice

Impartiality at the U.N.

In interviewing Arkady N. Shevchenko about "the Soviets' complete disregard of the impartial nature of the U.N. Secretariat" (Book Review, March 10), Juliana Geran Pilon asks or says nothing regarding the issue of Shevchenko and the United States' own disregard in having him spy. Pilon and the right-wing Heritage Foundation have chided American U.N. employees for their impartiality ("Americans at the U.N.: An Endangered Species," Backgrounder #247, Feb. 14, 1983, Pages 14-16). Such double standards are characteristic of the "philosopher" Pilon and the Heritage Foundation's attitude and approach to the United Nations.

JOHN W. OSBORN JR.
Vice President for Model U.N. and Government Relations
Southern California Division, United Nations Assn. of the U.S.A.

Best Sellers

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Placement on national list is noted in parentheses.

FICTION

1. **If Tomorrow Comes** by Sidney Sheldon (Morrow) (2)
2. **Family Album** by Danielle Steel (Delacorte) (1)
3. **Inside, Outside** by Herman Wouk (Little, Brown) (3)
4. **The Lonely Silver Rain** by John D. MacDonald (Knopf) (7)
5. **Proof** by Dick Francis (Putnam's) (5)
6. **Thinner** by Richard Bachman (NAL Books) (4)
7. **The Hunt for Red October** by Tom Clancy (Naval Institute) (6)
8. **Mindbend** by Robin Cook (Putnam's) (9)
9. **Glitz** by Elmore Leonard (Arbor House) (8)
10. **Mexico Set** by Len Deighton (Knopf) (13)
11. **Moscow Rules** by Robert Moss (Villard)
12. **Queenie** by Michael Korda (Linden)
13. **Hotel Du Lac** by Anita Brookner (Pantheon)
14. **Linden Hills** by Gloria Naylor (Ticknor & Fields)
15. **The Sicilian** by Mario Puzo (Linden) (11)

GENERAL

1. **Iacocca** by Lee Iacocca with William Novak (Bantam) (1)
2. **Breaking With Moscow** by Arkady Shevchenko (Knopf) (2)
3. **Inventing the Dream: California Through the Progressive Era** by Kevin Starr (Oxford)
4. **Citizen Hughes** by Michael Drosnin (Holt, Rinehart & Winston) (7)
5. **Nothing Down** by Robert G. Allen (Simon & Schuster) (3)
6. **Loving Each Other** by Leo Buscaglia (Slack/Holt, Rinehart & Winston) (6)
7. **What They Don't Teach You at Harvard Business School** by Mark H. McCormack (Bantam) (4)
8. **1985 Physicians' Desk Reference** by the editors (Medical Economics)
9. **The One Minute Salesperson** by Spencer Johnson and Larry Wilson (Morrow) (8)
10. **Surely You're Joking Mr. Feynman: Adventures of a Curious Character** by Richard P. Feynman with Ralph Leighton (Norton) (15)
11. **Weight Watchers Quick Start Program Cookbook** by Jean Nidetch (NAL Books) (5)
12. **Conversations With Capote** by Lawrence Grobel (NAL Books)
13. **Distant Neighbors: Portrait of the Mexicans** by Alan Riding (Knopf)
14. **The Courage to Change: Personal Conversations About Alcoholism With Dennis Wholey** by Dennis Wholey (Houghton Mifflin) (11)
15. **The Last Romantic: A Biography of Queen Marie of Roumania** by Hannah Pakula (Simon & Schuster)

AND THE CRITICS COMMEND:

Telling Lies: Clues to Deceit in the Marketplace, Politics and Marriage, Paul Ekman (Norton). For anyone with nothing to hide . . . this study explains how lying can be detected.

The Memoirs of John Addington Symonds, edited by Phyllis Grosskurth (Random House). Captures the agony of living in contradiction with circumstance—Victorian England—both in sexual preference and social expectations.

Flaubert's Parrot, Julian Barnes (Knopf). Author battles dullness in the realm of literary criticism.

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